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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001230

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [SY](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: SHARING TIGRIS-EUPHRATES WATER DATA

REF: A. 2004 ANKARA 1373

[B](#). 2004 BAGHDAD 360

[C](#). 2004 ANKARA 5780

[D](#). TURKISH MFA WEBSITE: WWW.MFA.COM.TR/MFA/MAINISSUES

Classified By: Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman. Reasons 1.4
b & d.

[1](#)1. (C) Post understands from Embassy Baghdad's February 14-20 Essential Services Report that Iraqi Water Minister Rashid may be about to or have already sent a letter to the Turkish government requesting technical data on Tigris and Euphrates water supplies.

[1](#)2. (C) In a March 2 meeting on other issues, the Foreign Ministry's water expert DDG Mithat Rende told ECON/C that the GOT had within the last year provided such data to Iraq and that it did not intend to provide any further information until it received a response to a Turkish request for information on the uses of Tigris-Euphrates water in Iraq. Rende said that this is a long-standing request, originally made to the former Iraqi government in May 2001 and renewed last year in a diplomatic note sent by the Turkish embassy in Baghdad. In addition to water flows and uses, the Turks asked for details on Iraqi water institutions and physical infrastructure.

[1](#)3. (C) As post has reported over the years (most recently refs a and b) Turkey's official policy on water issues (also described in detail on the MFA website - ref D), supports cooperation with Iraq and Syria. Turkey's policy is that such cooperation should be guided by acceptance of a basic principle that the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates are to be shared by the three riparian states in an equitable manner based on the best and most efficient uses of the water in the Tigris-Euphrates basin taken as a whole. The policy rejects allocating water according to "mathematical" formulas that are based on assertions by Iraq or Syria of "acquired" or historical "rights."

[1](#)4. (C) Turkish officials believe that acceptance of the idea of looking at water sources and uses within the Mesopotamian basin globally is a long-term vision that does not currently have political support in Iraq and Syria (and perhaps Turkey). They have therefore suggested "confidence building measures" that would build political support for such an approach. Former President Demirel, who is often perceived as a Turkish hawk on water issues, outlined possible measures in a September 2004 speech to a University of California Rosenberg International Forum on Water Policy meeting in Ankara. Demirel, speaking for the GOT, said water dialogue could "be initiated through informal exchange of information and data at experts level," proceed to discussions of general principles, and eventually to include cross border projects.

[1](#)5. (C) Demirel's speech followed an August 2004 Ankara meeting between Minister Rashid and Turkish FM Gul in which Rashid proposed that the two sides begin active cooperation on water issues. IGC officials also raised water cooperation in a February 2004 meeting that included CPA representatives. Rightly or wrongly, another Iraqi data request that did not respond to Turkish information requests and acknowledge the notion of reciprocity and cooperation would undoubtedly be rejected by Ankara as a signal that Iraq's post-1958 zero-sum understanding of water cooperation has not changed. USG intervention in support of a unilateral Iraqi request would be fruitless.

[1](#)6. (C) Comment: The Turks tell us they would welcome "facilitation" by third parties like the United States in helping the three countries reach a consensus on the need for cooperation. However, they reject a role for go-betweens or outside mediation that would allow the parties to avoid direct interaction. Given the key role these issues will play in good relations between Turkey and Iraq, facilitative steps the U.S. government might consider include support for and participation in academic conferences that would be attended by representatives of other riparian countries. Such conferences could lead to academic studies on how the concept of integrated river basin management would be applied in the Tigris-Euphrates context. In addition, the United States might want to look at financial support for projects that would help create a shared water database. Such projects could include use of satellite and other remote technology for non-intrusive monitoring of water flows and

uses. In any case, we would welcome an early visit by USG water experts to Ankara and southeastern Turkey that would build and update our technical understanding of Turkish policies and water infrastructure.

17. (U) Minimize considered.
EDELMAN